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Sleep's Siren Calls

Three hours of sleep is not enough to forget the world:
a 4 AM darkness pants damply against the window,
with deep, dull clangs and high frequency hisses the radiator launches
while beeper's unbloodied blade repeatedly pierces splayed-out senses.
I'd been dreaming too sweetly for this offensive—

the mind's first stirring is to question everything.

The inky apparitions piled in my clothes surrounded by name tag,
3×5 cards and clipboard menace my mind into chanting:

“Swarming vat of mental vapors let rise
barely contained visions of marked surprise
to put the steam again in sleepy eyes.”

Nearly awake, I still question everything.

Like the wayward chutist wrapped in a web of branches
I wonder if I can make my arms and legs move.
As a creepy panic scrambles over exposed nerves
I count how many more call nights I have to endure
and wonder how other doctors shake this stupor—

do they also question everything?

Talks with patients, serious and humorous,
and conversations with 5 AM-punchy colleagues
drag back with me to my suite
“to get my one last hour of sleep”
crowded with dreams who visit, nurture and leave me
marveling that I questioned anything.

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